

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 28, 2004

CONTACT: Jeff Duncan

or Mark Bayer

(202) 225-2836

HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT DETAILS SECURITY RISKS AT EVERETT LNG FACILITY

AGENCY DESCRIBES POSSIBLE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN STOWAWAYS ON LNG TANKERS AND TERRORIST GROUPS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA) today released a letter from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which reported that Algerian-flagged liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers docking at the Distrigas LNG terminal in Everett, Massachusetts may have been used by Algerian nationals to illegally enter the United States, and that some of the individuals who entered the country aboard these tankers “may have had indirect associations with those indicted for the Millennium Bombing Plot.”

“This information would seem to confirm statements made in former counter-terrorism Czar Richard Clark’s recent book indicating that LNG tankers entering Boston Harbor may have been used by terrorists as a means of infiltrating into our country,” said Rep. Markey, who is a senior Democratic Member of the Homeland Security Committee and whose District includes the City of Everett.

In an April 15, 2004 letter that Rep. Markey released today, Homeland Security Department Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Pamela J. Turner reported that “in early 2001 there was some suspicion of possible associations between stowaways on Algerian flagged LNG tankers arriving in Boston and persons connected with the so-called ‘Millennium Plot.’” Turner reported that “as a result of that suspicion, the Coast Guard increased its scrutiny of LNG vessels and worked with LNG terminal operators and state and local officials to intensify security measures even in the absence of specific, credible threat information.”

A DHS document attached to Turner’s letter reports that “about 10 years ago, the Coast Guard did receive indication of alleged criminal activity associated with LNG tankers entering the Boston area.” In August 1995, the Coast Guard, the U.S. Customs Service, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service” boarded an Algerian-flagged vessel in Boston suspected of carrying drugs and illegal aliens.” In May of 2001 – just four months before the September 11th terrorist attacks -- federal and state law enforcement officials boarded the Algerian LNG carrier Mostefa Be Boulaid and “discovered substantial amounts of U.S. currency and drugs.” DHS reports that “one Algerian crewmember was arrested in connection with the drug seizure.”

The DHS further reported to Rep. Markey that “during 2000 and 2001, “personnel assigned to the First Coast Guard District in Boston received information at the field level that another federal agency in the region was following up on a suspicion that there may be a possible connection between stowaways on Algerian-flagged LNG tankers in Boston and persons connected with the so-called ‘Millenium Plot’” to bomb several prominent U.S. landmarks at the time of the Millenium celebration.

(MORE)

The DHS letter goes on to report that “Preliminary analysis shows a handful of illegal migrants may have had indirect associations with those indicted for the Millennium Bombing Plot.” DHS, cautioned, that “this information is largely derived from what these individuals told law enforcement” and that “the Department has not been able to verify what the associations, intentions, or operational activities of these individuals were when they entered the United States.”

DHS also reports that “as a result of conversations between the National Security Council Staff and senior Coast Guard officials during the spring and summer 2001 regarding an increase in the level of general terrorism-related intelligence reporting, the Coast Guard tasked its Intelligence Coordination Center to gather more information on LNG tankers and other ‘high consequence’ vessels approaching the United States. “ Following the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks, DHS reports that “all LNG carriers are subjected to increased pre-arrival vetting and security measures.”

Rep. Markey concluded, “The Homeland Security Department has provided a chilling confirmation that individuals with possible terrorist connections may have entered the U.S. onboard LNG tankers that docked in Everett. This underscores the need for the federal government, as well as state and local governments, to maintain the strongest possible security precautions for all LNG shipments entering the Port of Boston. I plan to continue to press each agency to do everything possible to safeguard this facility from terrorist threats.

Copies of the letter Rep. Markey released today, as well as related correspondence on LNG security, can be found at www.house.gov/markey.

* * *